

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : CIA
RECORD NUMBER : 104-10336-10012
RECORD SERIES : JFK
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : PROJFILES-ARRB REQUESTS

Released under the John
F. Kennedy
Assassination Records
Collection Act of 1992
(44 USC 2107 Note).
Case#:NW 53217 Date:
06-24-2017

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

AGENCY ORIGINATOR : ARRB
FROM : ARRB
TO : CIA/HRG
TITLE : ARRB REQUEST: CIA-IR-13: OFFICE/PERSON DEALING WITH
ORGANIZED CRIME AND CUBA
DATE : 04/16/1997
PAGES : 19

SUBJECTS : FORD CHARLES
JFK ASSASSINATION
UNIT INDEX
ARRB REQUEST
FISCALINI

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER
CLASSIFICATION : SECRET
RESTRICTIONS : 1A
CURRENT STATUS : RELEASED IN PART PUBLIC - RELEASED WITH DELETIONS
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 01/13/04
COMMENTS : JFK-M-20 : F13 : 20030731-973803 : UNIT INDEX

[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED 104-10336-10012

Mr. J. Barry Harrelson
April 16, 1997
Page 9

DRAFT

"George Bush" in question. CIA is now checking whether the search query included George Herbert Walker Bush prior to 1970. CIA should determine whether George Herbert Walker Bush is the person to whom the memorandum refers and should provide a definitive statement regarding the scope of its search and the basis of its conclusion.

CIA-IR-10 IG Reports.

CIA will determine whether the IG's office maintains an index or inventory of its reports and determine whether the IG's office prepared a report on the handling of Oswald.

CIA-IR-11 Warren Commission critics.

We are asking that CIA determine whether it possesses any files or records on Warren Commission critics Edward J. Epstein, Josiah Thompson, Mark Lane, Harold Weisberg, or Sylvia Meagher. The Review Board is not requesting information *per se* regarding any FOIA requests by these individuals or any Public Affairs news clippings.⁷

CIA-IR-12 Contacts with journalists or publishing houses.

The Review Board seeks to determine to what extent, if any, CIA might have attempted to influence any journalists or publishers regarding public discussion of the assassination. This request, originally discussed in March 1997, was raised at the DO follow-up briefing on April 1, 1997. The DO had no response and no time frame for a response.

CIA-IR-13 Office or person dealing with organized crime and Cuba.

The Review Board requested that CIA make a particular personnel file available. The file was made available by CIA for review. The Review Board will discuss with you whether any further steps need to be taken. X

⁷To the extent that CIA possesses FOIA files or records on any of these individuals, and to the extent that those records contain information that was not filed with the courts, such records *are being requested for review by the Review Board.*

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25 March 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: ARRB Request No. CIA-IR-13, for Information
Concerning Office or Person Dealing with
Organized Crime and Cuba

1. ARRB Request No. CIA-IR-13, asked for information on a specific office or person which may have dealt with organized crime and Cuba about the time of the Kennedy assassination. Further, the request asked for a response concerning the searches made by the Agency to identify this office or person.

2. The Agency conducted an extensive records search for any employee who might have been involved in activities akin to those described within the request. The search identified a former employee, Charles D. Ford, as one who may have had such responsibilities for a period of time.

3. The former employee's personnel file was requested by the ARRB staff and it was provided. Review of the file by a ARRB staff member resulted in a number of documents being declared assassination records -- three fitness reports and a recommendation, approval document and citation for an Agency Career Intelligence Medal. These documents have been added to materials awaiting indexing and review by the ARRB.

3. The inclusion of these documents within the JFK collection for future processing completes HRP action on subject request.

J. Barry Harrelson

Seen: Concur

For the Directorate of Operations date

For the Directorate of Administration date

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14 September 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR: Laura Denk
Executive Director, ARRB

FROM: J. Barry Harrelson
JFK Project Officer, HRP/OIM

SUBJECT: CIA-IR-13, Office or Person Dealing with
Organized Crime and Cuba

1. This is in response to referent request.
2. Searches were made for information responsive to the request and materials were provided for examination by ARRB staff. From that examination, staff members selected a number of documents to be included within the JFK Collection. Those documents have now been included within the JFK Collection and are being processed for release to NARA.
3. This concludes the Agency's action on this request. If you have any question, please advise.



J. Barry Harrelson

~~SECRET~~

INTERVIEW FORM

NAME: PORD, Charles

TELEPHONE

ALIAS

OFFICE OTR

OFFICE APPROVAL
Signature

Date

DATE OF INTERVIEW 18 Sept 75

TIME 120-1315

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW Carrol Arms

TRANSPORTATION REQUIRED: YES NO

FROM HEADQUARTERS
(time)

OTHER

INTERVIEWED BY: Postal, Gordon Rhea, Rhett Dawson,
Fred Baron, Robert Kelly.

SUBJECT: Cuban Operations - Task Force W -
Assassination of Castro - Mafia connections.

COMMENTS: Under oath. This was second meeting.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD: Attached.

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(2)

Interview by Senate Committee Investigators

Director of Training

1026
C of C

3245

19 September 1975

DDTR

DTR

Chief, Division D
7B-44 Hqs.

Assistant to the Director
6D-15 Hqs.

logged - no file

SEP 1 3 17 PM '75

Step
Margie

(3)

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19 September 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview by Senate Committee Investigators

1. On Thursday, 18 September 1975, I was interviewed for the second time by investigators from the Senate Committee. The interview lasted from approximately 11:20 a.m. until 1:15 p.m. My testimony was recorded and will be transcribed. When the transcription is ready I will be required to read it and swear to the truthfulness of the statements I made. Under ordinary circumstances, a Senator would have been present to swear me in at this interview. However, because of the televised public hearings, no Senators were available. An unidentified woman operated the equipment which consisted of a Sony cassette recorder and dictaphone cassette recorder. The primary questioning was by Mr. Postal and Mr. Gordon Rhea, the same investigators with whom I spoke on the earlier occasion. At one point or another during the proceedings three other men joined us for various periods of time. Mr. Rhott Dawson appeared shortly after the interview began and remained for about an hour. Mr. Fred Behren (I can't vouch for the spelling) arrived after about half an hour and remained for approximately twenty minutes, having received a phone call which took him away. Mr. Bob Kelly arrived shortly after Mr. Behren and stayed for about 10 minutes longer than Mr. Behren. The interview was conducted in a room in the Carroll Arms a former hotel across the street from the Senate Office Building.

2. The meeting began with a reminder that I could have an attorney present and that I could refuse to answer any question which might tend to incriminate me. I was asked to describe in general terms my work with CIA. I told them that I joined in 1949; that I was and am now a member of the Office of Training; that in 1960 or thereabouts I had a short tour of duty with the Economic Action Group in the DDP, and that I went directly from that assignment to MI/4 in September of 1961.

3. I was asked to recall my major activities while with the Cuban operation and I did so. I reported that my first assignment was the handling of a Cuban agent, one we were using to build a nucleus of an organization for eventual operations into Cuba. I identified this man as Mr. Rojas (Mr. Rhea, having heard my description of this activity at our earlier session, did not pursue this matter any further).

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4. The investigators were interested in when I was assigned the code name Fiscalini; the circumstances under which the name was assigned, and who had assigned it. I told them I had seen a Xerox copy of the memorandum (I saw this during a meeting with Bill Sturbits last Friday in Bill's office) which requested that identification in the name of Fiscalini be assigned to me. I explained the circumstances, which Mr. Postal and Mr. Kiva had heard at our earlier meeting, and said that I thought the date was the end of March, 1962. The circumstances involved a contact by a New York lawyer, thru the Department of Justice, concerning a client who had access to Cuba and wanted to visit Castro to put in a special plea on behalf of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. I identified the individual concerned (I still can't remember his name) as the manager of the Teresa Hotel in New York. I did not identify the lawyer and was not asked for his name. I identified a man I met at a second meeting in New York as "Bubbles" Abdallah. I explained that the latter individual proposed to accompany the manager of the Teresa to Cuba, the manager being an elderly gentleman with some difficulty in walking. I explained to the investigators that I had no further contacts with these people after I discovered that Abdallah was wanted, or under indictment - I forget which - by Texas authorities for smuggling drugs from Mexico. Mr. Robert Kelly was clearly interested in pursuing the matter of who assigned my "Code Name." I indicated that the documentation that I received came from the Office of Security but that I did not know whether that Office selected the name or not.

5. We went over again the story of my contact with a Canadian named "Joe" (I know this man's last name but have not been asked for it and have not volunteered it). I described one meeting and a telephone call involving Joe. In the meeting he claimed that he could travel back and forth from Canada to Cuba; revealed to me that he was interested in starting a smuggling activity involving goods on the proscribed list; that he wanted United States citizenship and a great deal of money in exchange for allowing us to send materials or tamper with some of the shipments if we could get the proscribed goods to Canada. I explained to the investigators that my interest lay in the fact that Joe claimed he could speak with Che Guevara and that I had attempted to get Joe to serve as a means of communication between us and Che, which Joe refused to do. As for the telephone call, I told them that when Joe returned from his trip to Cuba he called to say that big things were going on in Cuba and we should meet right away. Being aware that at that point we in the Agency were deep into what would later be called the Cuban Missile Crisis, I told Joe I could not see him and that we probably already knew what he had to tell me. That was the last I heard of Joe.

6. We spent a great deal of time going over my meetings with the Attorney General and his interest in a small group of Cubans who claimed to have supporters in Cuba ready to create an uprising in Santiago Province. This is the case described in paragraph 3 of my earlier memorandum. The investigators were quite interested in the identity of the man whom I saw at the request of the Attorney General. I went over this again in as much detail as I could remember but without being able to recall who this man was. I was asked if I could describe the

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man and I said that I recalled him as a fairly tall man of average build with black hair, black eyebrows and glasses. Of considerable interest is the fact that perhaps 15 to 20 minutes later I was shown an 8 X 10 glossy photograph of several people walking in front of what appeared to be a public building and was asked whether I could identify any of the people in the picture. I could not. Mr. Postal pointed to the central figure and asked if I could identify him. I said I could not. (The picture was of a man probably in his mid-sixties with flowing white hair - somewhat on the order of Senator Keating - a large down-curving nose, white, straight eye brows behind dark glasses, a somewhat lined, puffy face, and a slightly receding forehead accentuated by the fact that his hair was combed straight from front to back. The man was wearing a dark blue or black suit, and one man appeared to be accompanying him to his left and slightly ahead, and another man slightly to his right and rear. Without having any reference points by which to judge, my best guess would be that the subject was about 5'10" tall. He appeared to be rather heavy, perhaps in the range of 220 pounds. There seemed to be a caption of some sort at the bottom of the picture but this was hidden from my view.) Mr. Postal asked whether the main figure in the photograph could have been the man the Attorney General directed me to see. I replied that, even allowing for the difference in years, the man in the photograph in no way resembled the man I saw on behalf of the Attorney General.

7. Messrs. Postal and Rhea again brought up the subject of assassination and asked whether I had engaged in or had heard mention of, in Task Force W or SAS, discussions on the subject of assassination either in general or specifically with respect to Castro. I told the investigators that the subject came up repeatedly when we were speaking with Cubans, many of whom, having been forced to flee Cuba, sincerely wished for Castro's immediate demise. I said that I had never heard of or engaged in conversations with Agency officers about any plan the direct and only aspect of which was the assassination of Fidel Castro. I pointed out that on a number of occasions I dealt with Cubans who wanted to kill Castro, but that my job was simply to attempt to extract from these contacts the names of people in Cuba who might be of potential use to us in intelligence operations. I said that I had never engaged in plotting with Cubans regarding assassination but that I had many conversations with Cubans regarding their desire to conduct paramilitary activities which, as a by-product, might well result in Castro's death. I pointed out emphatically that the Agency's policy prohibits political assassination.

8. I was asked if I knew Bill Wainwright and Nestor Sanchez. I told them that I knew them both and that Nestor and I shared an office for a short period near the end of my attachment with SAS. I was asked if "AM-LASH" meant anything to me and I replied in the negative. This was followed by whether Bill and Nestor had discussed with me or mentioned an operation of theirs involving a high level officer of the Cuban government, a military man who made frequent trips out of Cuba. Again I could only reply in the negative. I added the juxtaposition of Bill and Nestor in the context of a single operation surprised

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me inasmuch as I believed Nestor to have been involved only in psychological operations and Bill working at collecting foreign intelligence. I was then asked if the word "AMOTS" meant anything to me and I said it did but that all I could say was that it had to do with counterintelligence activities. Mr. Rhea asked me whether I could say that the "AMOTS" activity was concerned with contacting Cuban exiles in the Miami area and I indicated that this was my understanding. The subject was not pursued further.

9. I was asked about my visit to New Orleans (which I had mentioned during the previous session) and I explained that these two trips were for the purpose of attempting to find ways of establishing channels of communication between the exiled Cubans in New Orleans and their friends in Cuba. I indicated that I had been able to come up with a very fine prospect, a Cuban, and that I had turned him over to one of our FI Case Officers. I also said that I had several discussions with an American whom I declined to identify under the general ground rule relating to sources of information. Messrs. Postal and Rhea asked if I would respond affirmatively if they were to suggest some initials which might correspond to the name of my American contact. I agreed to do this but the initials which they mentioned meant nothing. (Unfortunately, I cannot recall them!) I volunteered the initials of my contact, "FJ", and this produced a blank expression on the part of both investigators and a shrug of Mr. Rhea's shoulders. The final question I was asked was whether I had any knowledge of the "Ponchartrain Operation". I told them that I knew where Lake Ponchartrain was, and that's as far as it went.

10. We spent a little time on the subject of General Landsdale. I admitted I had attended one meeting in General Landsdale's office in the Pentagon. I was asked whether anyone else was there and said that I could recall only one name, Cornelius Roosevelt, but that there were two other people at the meeting. In response to a series of questions about what was discussed at that meeting, I said that General Landsdale was interested in various paramilitary possibilities and that my role was limited to giving a quick assessment of whether we had the agent assets to assist in carrying out the various possible operations that General Landsdale suggested.

11. I was asked whether the term "Wongoose" meant anything to me and I indicated that it was a general term used to refer to a composite of planned operational activities. I said that I had no knowledge of any specific activity being planned under this name and further explained that it was possible that some of my Cuban contacts might have been taken over by other Case Officers for use under "Wongoose" but that I had no direct knowledge of such having been done.

12. Mr. Robert Kelly expressed considerable interest in the organization of Task Force W. At one point he asked how many echelons there were between me and Mr. Helms. I told them that I reported to Bill Harvey; that my title was Special Assistant; that Mr. Harvey reported to Mr. Helms; that I frequently received

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assignment and reported to Sam Halpern; and that occasionally I undertook tasks for Grace Cheever, Harvey's deputy, although these tasks were concerned with the workings of Task Force W and did not involve contact with the Cubans. I was asked if there were any Special Assistant other than me in Task Force W and I replied that Mr. Logly, C/21/4 prior to Mr. Harvey's arrival on the scene, had been retained as a member of Task Force W in an SA status. I said that there may well have been others because people would show up from time to time for short tours of duty for several months or so and then depart to carry on their work elsewhere, but that I could not recall anyone by name at the present time.

13. I was asked whether I used the name Fiscalini in circumstances other than those described. I said that I frequently carried identification in that name and used it on several occasions. I described one occasion which was an amusing one-time contact with no bearing on any item of interest to the committee. The investigator asked whether I had ever contacted Cubans in Miami and I replied in the negative.

14. I was asked if I had ever made contacts with people in New York City other than those described. I said that indeed I had but that in one case, although the man in question lived in New York, the meeting took place in Newark, New Jersey. In response to a question I said that the lead was provided by the FBI. I declined to identify the man involved on the grounds of the sensitivity of his position at that time and the fact that I do not know at present where he is or what he is doing. (This was the beginning of the unsuccessful ECHO Operation which should be recorded somewhere in the Task Force W or Miami Station files.)

15. I was asked whether I had any knowledge of a meeting of the Attorney General and Cuban exile leaders in the summer of 1962. I said that such a meeting would not have been unusual, in my opinion, but that I had no knowledge of such a meeting. I pointed out that it was common practice among many Cuban leaders to try to acquire the support, or at least the appearance of support, of U.S. agencies and prominent U.S. political figures. I further stated that numerous attempts were made to get the U.S. to support a Cuban government-in-exile and that I had had one meeting in Washington with a Cuban leader who was constantly attempting to get us to support him as head of such an arrangement. I identified this man as Mario Garcia-Kohly and added that he was sentenced to prison some years later for counterfeiting Cuban pesos. The name "Kohly" obviously rang a bell with Mr. Postal as he repeated it aloud in a surprised tone of voice. However, Mr. Postal did not pursue the matter.

16. Some of the other topics which were surfaced in connection with the above major items: I was asked whether I knew the following people or recognized the names. (My responses are summarized in the parentheses and I can't vouch for all the spellings):

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(Y)

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- (1) Carlos Teppedino (never heard of him)
- (2) Jose Orta (never heard of him)
- (3) Sam Giancana (read about him in newspaper; never met him)
- (4) Roselli (read about him in the newspaper; never met him)
- (5) Trafficante (read about him in newspaper; never met him)
- (6) Manuel Artino (a prominent member of Cuban brigade; never met him)
- (7) Big Jim O'Connell (heard about him in the newspaper; never met him)

I was asked whether "No Name Key" meant anything to me and I gave a negative response.

I was asked if I had visited Chicago in the course of my work and I told them I had not.

17. This is probably the appropriate point to underline my conviction that the main, if not the only, point of concern to the investigators is whether I was directed to sally forth and initiate contact with members of the underworld in the U.S. and who directed me to do so. Their interest is even more pointedly focussed on whether I had anything to do with the Rosselli, Giancana, et al, "operations". Once again, I explained that my job was broader than this by a long shot, and that I was never directed to take the initiative in establishing contacts with the underworld. I said that several, probably no more than five or six, of the people with whom I dealt were somewhat "shady" characters, in some cases with recorded run-ins with law enforcement agencies.

Charles D. Ford
Chief, Training Services Staff, OTR

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(9)

Mr. Waller

Shepard
Manning

John

I checked with
Walt Elder (3 Sept)
and he says that
IG has action on
this. (Charlie Ford is
OTR man I mentioned.)

I'd hold this memo
in case there is some
change of plan.

Approved by
18 Sept 75

Check with Dick -
I'm sure Ford said as a
memo in his interview. Shep

Comments:

Track down

Review Staff: 75/2723

Date 28 August 1975

Walter Elder ✓

Time

, reports that Mr. Helms
ed that in response to a
Robert Kennedy, the Agency
lish contacts with the under-
ssets for use against Castro.

ficer was Charles Ford who
ni.

nation we have on this and
Agency officer.

	Action	Info
SC/DCI		X
A/DDA	X	
A/DDI		
A/DDO		
A/DDS&T		
OGC		
OLC		
IG		
SA/PTC	✓	

SECRET

Classified by 68803
Exempt from automatic
downgrading and
declassification
because it contains
information the
disclosure of which
could result in the
identification of
sources of information
or methods of
obtaining information
or the disclosure of
information the
disclosure of which
could result in the
identification of
sources of information
or methods of
obtaining information

SECRET

P. 11

Review Staff: 75/2723

Date 28 August 1975

Handwritten: ~~File~~ ~~SAI~~ ~~DDI~~

TO : CIA Task Force
FROM : The Review Staff, Walter Elder ✓
SUBJECT : SSC/HSC Request
RECEIVED: Date _____ Time _____

Handwritten: J. Walter
M. Shays
M. York

Mike Madigan, SSC staff, reports that Mr. Helms and Mr. Halpern have testified that in response to a request by Attorney-General Robert Kennedy, the Agency assigned an officer to establish contacts with the under-world to look for possible assets for use against Castro.

Sam Halpern says the officer was Charles Ford who used the name, Rocky Siscalini.

Madigan wants any information we have on this and would like to interview the Agency officer.

Comments:

Handwritten: Track down

	Action	Info
SC/DCI		X
A/DDA	X	
A/DDI	<i>Handwritten:</i> G. J. 1	
A/DDO	<i>Handwritten:</i> G. J. 1	
A/DDS&T		
OGC		
OLC		
IG		
SA/PDO	✓	

SECRET

Classified by C0703
Exempt from automatic
downgrading and
declassification of E.O. 11652
Exemption authority: (1), (2), (3)
Exemption authority: (1), (2), (3)
Date: 10/10/00

THE
DARK SIDE
OF
CAMELOT

SEYMOUR M.
HERSH

ALSO BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

*Chemical and Biological Warfare:
America's Hidden Arsenal*

*My Lai Four:
A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath*

*Cover-up:
The Army's Secret Investigation of
the Massacre of My Lai Four*

*The Price of Power:
Kissinger in the Nixon White House*

*The Target Is Destroyed:
What Really Happened to Flight 007 and
What America Knew About It*

*The Samson Option:
Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and America's Foreign Policy*



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
BOSTON NEW YORK TORONTO

load its cargo of Cuban sugar, a CIA scientist broke into a warehouse and injected the sugar with a chemical to ruin the taste. "It was childish," Halpern says now. "But we were doing something under the pressure."

There was further humiliation for the men of Task Force W. Bobby Kennedy, increasingly impatient with the lack of progress in Cuba, decided in the early spring of 1962 to run his own operation. He once again moved into the back channel, as he had done with the Soviets, this time working with the Mafia. On his orders an experienced clandestine CIA operative named Charles Ford was assigned as the attorney general's personal agent. Kennedy's unprecedented request went up the chain of command to General Marshall Carter, the new deputy CIA director, for approval. Ford spent the next eighteen months, until the assassination of President Kennedy, making secret trips, at Bobby Kennedy's direction, to Mafia chieftains in the United States and Canada, while continuing to serve with Harvey and Halpern on Task Force W. "Bobby was absolutely convinced," Halpern told me, "that the mob had a stay-behind system in Cuba since they had so many assets left there. There were the casinos and gambling dens and prostitution rings and God knows what else. Kennedy thought that by tapping into those stay-behind units we could get some decent intelligence on what's going on in Cuba. The concept was crazy. The Mafia couldn't have set up a stay-behind system; it's too hard. Also, Castro had a great internal security system and you couldn't work contacts in the cities. That's why we" — in Task Force W — "operated in the countryside."

It was also possible, Halpern said, that Bobby Kennedy's primary purpose in dealing with Charles Ford was to do what Bill Harvey was not doing — find someone to assassinate Fidel Castro. "Charlie saw Kennedy in his office and of course talked to him on the phone quite regularly," Halpern told me. "Charlie was a good officer, and Bobby was his case officer. Charlie never reported that kind of information to me. He may never have reported it to anybody. He was Bobby's man. Nobody's going to touch him."

Kennedy initiated some of the telephone calls to Ford, Halpern said, but they were usually made on his behalf by Angie Novello, his longtime personal secretary. Novello, interviewed for this book briefly by telephone in 1994, said she remembered Halpern but had

"no memory" of ever calling CIA operatives, including Ford.* Halpern told me that Ford would make it a point to stop by his cubicle in the Task Force W offices and say, "See you again, Sam. I'm off again." Ford averaged two trips a month for the attorney general, and would dictate reports for Kennedy upon his return. "I know," Halpern said, "he went to places like Chicago, San Francisco, Miami — wherever Bobby sent him — including one trip to Canada." Ford, obviously following instructions from Kennedy, relayed nothing to his nominal superiors in Task Force W. "We never got a single solitary piece of [written] information," Halpern said. Charlie Ford's reports, if they still exist, presumably are among the millions of pages of Robert F. Kennedy papers that have yet to be released by the John F. Kennedy Library.[†]

Halpern said he and his colleagues had an ongoing concern for Ford's security. "We like to control our meeting places," he explained. "We don't like to walk into an unknown place." The husky and dark-skinned Ford, who had served in Japan and knew a great deal about the CIA's extensive operations there, was given identity papers and a careful cover story in the hope that his identity as a clandestine CIA officer would not become known to the Mafia.

"I don't know how Bobby Kennedy squared that in his own mind," Halpern said. "On the one hand, he allegedly was going after

* Halpern's recollection of conversations between Kennedy and Ford is supported in part by Robert Kennedy's telephone logs and appointment book for 1962, as made public by the Kennedy Library in 1994. They show that Kennedy met twice with Ford in September and also received a telephone call that month from Ford. In his 1993 memoir *CIA and the Cold War*, Scott D. Breckinridge, who was one of the authors of the CIA inspector general's 1967 report on assassination plotting, cryptically described the Ford assignment. As part of Mongoose, the CIA "was directed to provide an operations officer to meet with Mafia figures identified by Kennedy under circumstances over which CIA had no control." Breckinridge acknowledged in an interview for this book that he had been told the story by Halpern, and others, during the 1967 inquiry. Breckinridge did not identify Ford in his book, even after Ford's death, in keeping with the CIA practice of not naming previously unidentified clandestine agents. Halpern himself did not confirm Ford's involvement for this book until he was shown Ford's name and title on the attorney general's office logs.

† In a 1993 compilation, the Kennedy Library reported that its collection of RFK papers totaled 1,541 linear feet, of which 440 feet have been released for research. Few of Kennedy's working papers from his days as attorney general have been made available.

the Mafia to destroy them; on the other hand, he was using them for information about Cuba. Maybe it was a deal he made with them. Who knows?" Ford, who died in the late 1980s, never discussed — even years later — his missions for Kennedy, Halpern said.

Bobby Kennedy was doing more than "allegedly" going after the Mafia. Within days of taking office in January 1961, the attorney general had announced what the *Wall Street Journal* approvingly depicted as the "most sweeping campaign against gangsters, labor racketeers and vice overlords that the country has ever seen." His goal, Kennedy said, was to jail top criminals by bringing them up on whatever charges could be proven in a court of law. Kennedy backed up his words by invigorating the Justice Department's organized crime division and decreeing that he would make war on crime his priority as attorney general. He took the fight to Congress and won legislation making it a federal crime to transmit gambling information from state to state by telephone or telegraph, cutting deeply into the main profit center of organized crime. In his speeches and congressional testimony, Kennedy repeatedly insisted that fighting crime was a moral issue that could not be successful without fundamental changes in society. "The paramount interest in self, in material wealth, in security must be replaced by an actual, not just a vocal, interest in our country, by a spirit of adventure, a will to fight what is evil, and a desire to serve," he had said in *The Enemy Within* (1960), his account of the McClellan Committee investigation. "It is up to us as citizens to take the initiative as it has been taken before in our history, to reach out boldly but with honesty to do the things that need to be done."

Robert Kennedy's previously unrevealed involvement with Charles Ford provides new insight into a May 1962 meeting in the Justice Department. Arthur Schlesinger and other Kennedy admirers have repeatedly cited the meeting as evidence of both the attorney general's innocence of the CIA's assassination plotting and his adamant disapproval of any collaboration with organized crime.

At issue was a year-old dispute between the CIA and the FBI over the FBI's insistence on prosecuting Sam Giancana on wiretap charges that stemmed from Giancana's jealousy. The incident took place in

October 1960, when Giancana and Robert Maheu, the private investigator who was then serving as a CIA cutout, were sharing a hotel suite in Miami while trying to find a way to assassinate Castro. Giancana became convinced that his girlfriend, the singer Phyllis McGuire, was having an affair in Las Vegas with Dan Rowan, of the comedy team of Rowan and Martin. Maheu, eager to keep Giancana in Miami — and perhaps seeking to ingratiate himself with his Mafia collaborator — got approval from his CIA handlers, along with some necessary cash, and arranged to have Rowan's hotel room bugged and wiretapped. Maheu's man, a private investigator named Arthur J. Balletti, gained entrance to the room and, believing Rowan would not be back soon, left his wiretap equipment in it, unattended. A maid discovered the equipment and called the local sheriff, who arrested Balletti.

The case was turned over to the FBI, whose agents were told in late April 1961 that the CIA was working with Sam Giancana and the mob. Their informant was none other than Maheu, who — distressed at what he perceived as President Kennedy's cowardice at the Bay of Pigs — began talking to his former FBI colleagues. The FBI was "madder than hell," according to Sam J. Papich, a Hoover aide who handled liaison between the FBI and CIA, one of the most sensitive jobs in the American intelligence community. Papich told investigators for the Church Committee in 1975, according to a summary made available under the Freedom of Information Act, that the CIA's involvement posed a huge stumbling block to any possible prosecution of Giancana for illegal wiretapping. Papich, who was a reluctant witness, further told the committee that Bobby Kennedy "was concerned that this operation would become known, and didn't want it to get out." The flap went to the top of both agencies. Sheffield Edwards, director of the CIA's office of security, spent the winter and spring of 1961–62 trying to convince the FBI and Justice Department to drop the case and keep what they knew secret.

Nothing was resolved until April 1962, when Lawrence Houston, the CIA's general counsel, met with Herbert J. Miller, the assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's criminal division. Miller told him, Houston recorded in a memorandum obtained by the Church Committee, that he envisioned "no major difficulty in stopping action for prosecution," thus protecting the secrecy of the

CIA's use of the Mafia. Three weeks later, on May 7, Houston and Sheffield Edwards, representing the CIA, met with Bobby Kennedy in his office and — as Edwards told investigators for the CIA inspector general's 1967 assassinations report — “briefed” the attorney general “all the way.”

Houston, who was also questioned for the IG Report, described Bobby Kennedy as saying that “he could see the problem and that he would not proceed against those [Giancana et al.] involved in the wiretapping case.” Kennedy added, speaking “quite firmly, ‘I trust that if you ever try to do business with organized crime again — with gangsters — you will let the Attorney General know before you do it.’” At the time, of course, as Houston and Edwards apparently did not know, Kennedy — aided by Charles Ford — was himself trying to do business in Cuba with organized crime. Kennedy also was goading the agency to get on with getting rid of Castro and knew, as did his brother, that a pretty California woman named Judith Campbell was carrying messages to that effect between the president, Sam Giancana, and Johnny Rosselli. In the meeting with Edwards and Houston, the IG Report noted, Bobby Kennedy brought up the subject of Johnny Rosselli and his motivation: “The Attorney General had thought that Rosselli was doing the job (the attempt at assassination of Castro) for money. Edwards corrected that impression; he was not.” Four days later, Kennedy asked Houston and Edwards for a memorandum of the meeting. That summary, delivered on May 14, gave Kennedy an invaluable document for the record, stating that he had been angered upon hearing — presumably for the first time — of the Mafia's use in activities against Castro and had ordered the CIA to check with him before dealing again with criminals. It made no mention of Castro assassination planning — past, present, or future. Such actions, as Kennedy surely was aware, were never to be put in writing.

Thus, the 1967 CIA report, made public in 1993, concluded that although Houston and Edwards had fully briefed Kennedy on the CIA's use of the Mafia in the fall of 1960 and spring of 1961, they had left the impression that the operation “presumably was terminated following the Bay of Pigs fiasco.” What Houston and Edwards did not do, the IG Report added, was tell the attorney general that the assassination plotting was continuing, even as their meeting took place. “As far as

we know,” the IG Report added, Kennedy was never told that the CIA “had a continuing involvement with U.S. gangster elements.”

Both the IG Report and Church Committee report eight years later concluded that Edwards knew about the continuing assassination operation and had deliberately misled Kennedy at their meeting and in his follow-up written report.* They may have been wrong. By the fall of 1961 — several months before Edwards's meeting with Kennedy — the Castro assassination effort was in the hands of Bill Harvey's task force. Harvey, as many witnesses testified, was well known for keeping his operations to himself. In 1975 Edwards, then seriously ill, had it both ways when he testified before the Church Committee. He told the senators that he “did not know” when he met with Kennedy that the plotting against Castro had been revived. But he also said, “I thought Mr. Harvey was pretty foolish to continue this thing.” The retired CIA officer was candid about his reluctance to discuss the assassination plotting before the committee, saying, “I am not prepared to testify to that under oath. Please understand me. I am not trying to fight the battle, see.” Frank Church, the committee chairman, tried to be helpful: “I think if you say it [assassination] once you will get over the difficulty.” Edwards replied, “Well, what do you want me to say, Senator? What do you think I should say?” Edwards clearly intended to take his secrets to the grave with him.

The gist of the IG Report and Church Committee testimony is this: On May 7, 1962, the attorney general, having learned for the first time that the CIA had retained Giancana and Rosselli to murder Castro before the Bay of Pigs, did nothing more than tell the agency not to use the Mafia without clearing it with him first. He took no names, began no inquiry, and did nothing to make sure that such efforts never took place again. The incomplete and possibly false Edwards-Houston account of their meeting with Kennedy became the basis for Schlesinger's conclusion, in *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, that “the Kennedys did not know about the Castro assassination plots

* William Harvey, in his 1975 testimony before the committee, said that Edwards's suggestion that the assassination plotting had ended “was not true, and Colonel Edwards knew it was not true.” He explained that Edwards chose to “falsify” the record to insulate himself from any possible damage and from prosecution. “If this ever came up,” Harvey said, “the file would show that on such and such a date . . . he was no longer chargeable with this.”

before the Bay of Pigs or about the pursuit of those plots by the CIA after the Bay of Pigs."

There was another consideration, Schlesinger wrote: "No one who knew John and Robert Kennedy well believed they would conceivably countenance a program of assassination. Like McCone, they were Catholics."

Sam Halpern believes that he understands the import of the May 7 meeting: "Bobby was not telling us to stop, but [was telling us] not to do it again without checking with him." If that interpretation is correct, Kennedy's goal in the meeting with Houston and Edwards was twofold: to get on the record a statement that the CIA had ended its assassination plotting and, much more important, to ensure that the agency did not authorize a future clandestine operation that could compromise or endanger Charles Ford's continued meetings with the Mafia.

The most effective participant in Operation Mongoose was the Pentagon, whose planners had been instructed to prepare for a pitched battle in Cuba in the fall of 1962, in the event Lansdale's schemes paid off and Cuba was in revolt. As part of that planning, hundreds of thousands of American soldiers and sailors took part in military exercises in the Caribbean, under the watchful eye of Cuban intelligence. In August more than 65,000 men participated in Operation Swift Strike II, obviously meant to simulate an attack on an island like Cuba. Later, 7,500 U.S. Marines conducted a mock invasion of an island near Puerto Rico named "Ortsac"—Castro spelled backwards. In the fall of 1962 the Pentagon was ordered to begin prepositioning troops and matériel for a massive invasion of Cuba. If the president so ordered, an estimated 100,000 troops in military bases along the East Coast could hit the beaches of Cuba in eight days.

The military planning was being led by Admiral Robert Dennison, commander in chief of the Atlantic Fleet, and he took his mission seriously. "I had five army divisions and the Second Marine Division, reinforced by elements of the First Marine Division," Dennison said in a 1973 oral history for the U.S. Naval Institute. "And there were operations planned for the use of these forces against var-

ious landing areas in Cuba. All these would require naval and air force support. . . . My plans were approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, of course, were known to the president. He had to know what we could do, and how we were going to do it. We were up against some pretty strong ground forces, so some very drastic preparation would have to be made in the way of our bombing, gunfire. A great many people would have been killed. It would have been quite a bloody affair. And then, once having captured Cuba and occupied it, the United States would have had a terrible problem in rehabilitation, establishing a government. We would have been in there for years."

All of this — the helter-skelter sabotage, the continued assassination efforts, and the military planning and exercising — was seen and fully noted by the Cubans and their benefactors in the Soviet Union. The American aggression played a role in Nikita Khrushchev's decision to move Soviet nuclear missiles and launchers into Cuba, triggering the missile crisis of October 1962. It "now seems likely," the renowned Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University wrote in 1997, that "Khrushchev's chief purpose had not been to shift the strategic balance," as the White House claimed it was at the time,

but rather to save the Cuban revolution. . . . There has long been ample evidence that the Kennedy administration was trying to get rid of Castro *by all means short of an invasion*. Given the unprecedented level of American military activity in the Caribbean in the months and particularly the weeks before the crisis broke, it seems foolish to claim that the next step would never have been taken — especially if one of the CIA's many assassination plots against Castro had actually succeeded.

and the FBI's surveillance of her were deemed state secrets that had to be kept, even if crimes were ignored in the process.

Judith Exner did not learn about the break-in at her apartment until fifteen years later, when she won a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit and obtained her heavily censored FBI files. The documents, as released and still censored, said nothing about I. B. Hale, nor did they mention General Dynamics. By August 1962 her involvement with Kennedy and his brother had ended. Bobby Kennedy had replaced Exner with Charles Ford as a liaison to organized crime, and for Jack Kennedy there were dozens of women who would replace her in other ways.

By that fall, Exner said in *My Story*, she was deeply involved with Sam Giancana. "Love with Sam was not as exciting as it had been with Jack," she wrote, "but . . . it left me with a comfortable feeling instead of a gnawing emptiness. I felt like I really knew how to handle Sam. Once we became intimate, Sam did not change with me, he didn't revert to some unreasonably possessive creature." In an interview for this book, Exner acknowledged what she had not in her memoir: Sam Giancana had his own reasons for maintaining the relationship with her. "I'm not so naive that I don't think that his friendship with me and continued friendship wasn't very beneficial," she told me. "He could use it to his advantage if need be."

Jack Kennedy, she said, also used "Sam for his own purpose. And Sam would naturally expect something for it. I don't like to think of friendship being used that way." But, Exner added, "Jack didn't play by our rules; Jack had his own rules. I believe that all of the Kennedys play by their own rules. I don't think they conduct themselves the way we do. I think that's very sad."

In the late summer of 1962, Exner said, "I was very troubled, again, about the FBI surveillance and [Kennedy's] treating it lightly. He did say a couple of times that he would talk to Bobby and see what they could do about it. But it never seemed to me that anything was done. We had been having difficulties because I wouldn't move back to Washington. After we more or less broke up, he convinced me to go back and see him one more time."

In recent years, Judith Exner has been waging a furious battle

against a pervasive cancer; she was told ten years ago that she had only a few more years to live. In interviews for this book and for a 1996 profile in *Vanity Fair* magazine, she has added another new element to her story — Jack Kennedy made her pregnant on their last visit. It was that pregnancy, she now says, that drove her into the arms of Sam Giancana.

Exner, in her interview for this book, said that she and Kennedy agreed in late summer 1962, after she told him about the pregnancy, that she could not keep the baby. "In our next conversation," Exner said, "he asked, 'Would Sam help us?' I spoke to Sam and he said yes. Sam was angry at Jack, but it took the two of us for me to be in that position." In Sam's eyes, Exner insisted, "he was helping me. You know, a lot of people can say, 'Oh boy, this is just something else he [Giancana] could hold over Jack's head.' I don't care what they say, I know what he did for me." She wasn't angry at Kennedy, she said. "I was heartbroken."

It was at this point, Exner told me, that she became intimate with Sam Giancana. He had responded to news of her pregnancy by asking her to marry him. "I told him, 'Sam, you don't want to marry me.' I knew he was in love with Phyllis [McGuire]. And he just said, 'You deserve to be asked.' It was the one time with Sam and it was an emotional response to his loving-kindness and caring for what I was going through. But I would hardly say that that was having a simultaneous affair with two men."

Exner's most recent account of her faithfulness to Jack Kennedy conflicts with the chronology in *My Story*. She may have indeed been faithful to Jack Kennedy for much of their time together, as she has steadfastly insisted, or she may have been making love to both men at the same time. The issue of when she became intimate with Sam Giancana, however important to Exner today, does not affect the importance of her story.

Exner, in her interviews for this book, told me that despite all, she remains convinced that "Jack loved me, to the extent that he could love someone. A lot of people think that I'm kidding myself, but I knew him. I was the one who was with him. He had a place for everything in his life, and he gave only so much of himself to whatever that was — whether it be love, work, or play." In that regard, she said, "he emulated his father. I think all the boys in the family have